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AUTHOR Hopkirk, Gerald; Newton, Earle
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ABSTRACT

This study examines the organizational structures of schools and school systems using six complementary but distinct perspectives--societal, intentional, structural, analytical, portrait, and narrative--in order to ascertain the appropriateness of structural revision in relation to changes in Canadian society. Following an examination of the assumptions behind many hierarchical organizational structures and the effects of these assumptions on individuals, some different and potentially creative assumptions are explored, which emphasize the individual rather than the organizational imperative. Temporary structures and collateral organizations are presented as suitable for experimentation with these new assumptions. Administrators are urged to examine educational structures in light of these considerations. (TE)

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TOWARDS RECONSTRUCTION OF EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: PERSPECTIVES AND POSSIBILITIES

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A paper presented to the Canadian Association for the Study of Educational Administration, Montreal, 1985.

Gerald Hopkirk
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

Earle Newton
University of Saskatchewan

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ABSTRACT

Etzioni (1961) viewed organizations as dynamic social units deliberately constructed and reconstructed to accomplish specific goals. While this appears to be happening in the business world on a daily basis, it seems to occur much less frequently in schools and school systems. The realization that organizations are constructed by humans for a particular set of circumstances and that changing conditions will in all likelihood require structural adjustments, leads one to question the apparent structural stability in educational organizations.

Organizational structures of schools and school systems are examined using six complementary but distinct perspectives, and related to the changing Canadian scene with a view to discerning the appropriateness of structural revision. Following an examination of the assumptions behind many of our organizational structures and the impact of these assumptions on individuals, some different, and hopefully, creative assumptions are explored. Temporary structures and collateral organizations are presented as suitable for experimentation with the new assumptions; assumptions which place emphasis on the individual rather than the organizational imperative. Administrators and policy makers are urged to examine educational structures in the light of these considerations.

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INTRODUCTION

"I sometimes wonder how much longer I can last in this job," sighed Lynn Ramsay, principal of an urban, secondary school. "In addition to the usual running of a school I am trying to support the improvement of instruction. We have a 'Third Wave' committee examining alternative futures of this school because we have only 600 students. I think I need to learn Italian in order to sell our programs to this community. I need time and support to cope with all this frantic activity." (Metro Toronto-Fall 1984)

"What is going on?" wondered Val Frechette driving home from a board meeting. "As superintendent, I supported the principal and teacher in saying that a request for a seven-year-old to be placed in another classroom could not be met. The parents appealed the decision and the Board sided with the parents! I wonder about all this involvement of the public." (Rural Alberta-February, 1985)

Situations such as these are common across the country. What <u>is</u> going on? Etzioni (1961) reminds us that organizations are dynamic social units delibertly constructed and reconstructed to accomplish specific goals. Is it time for some reconstruction of educational organizations? We do see reconstruction of other organizations around us all the time. An executive of Imperial Oil explained "We had too many people who would say 'no' and too few who would say 'yes.' We had to reduce the bureaucracy and get moving." Government agencies such as F.I.R.A. are being changed. Banks are using automatic tellers. Airlines are being deregulated.

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Schools certainly appear to be changing. In the fall of 1984 we talked to a curriculum coordinator whose school system had 100 curriculum changes underway over the K-12 spectrum. A recent CEA Newsletter includes information about Canadian studies, native languages, a commission on financing, truancy regulations, public relations, policy on school counselling and guidance, and day care in the school. At a glance it may seem that schools are changing a great deal but are they really? Sarason (1971) claims that the more schools change the more they stay the same because the changes are only cosmetic to give the appearance of changing. The Management Finance Plan in Alberta, "OSIS" in Ontario, and the extension of schooling to include grade 12 in Newfoundland certainly give the appearance of change but one is left to wonder if these will make any substantive difference to students and teachers. Furthermore, these changes rarely attend to the deeper philosophical and value related issues inherent in educational organizations.

Based upon analyses of twenty case studies, Newton (1983), revealed that many instructional changes are ineffective because of lack of organizational changes which would provide for involvement, interaction, support from principals, and sufficient materials. Goodlad (1984) claims that principals get caught up in routine, that the departmental structure chops up the high school curriculum, and that teachers and principals rarely come together to examine total programs. He calls for complete restructuring of schools if they are to respond appropriately to changing conditions.

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Also, schools and school systems contain many "artificial" structures. An artificial structure is a mode of interaction, often legitimized by its lengthy tenure, which is out of touch with principles of sound pedagogy and thus in need of re-examination. Examples include the classroom, per se, where typically groups of 25-35 children meet with a teacher for 40 minute blocks of time for the purpose of learning. The magic of these numbers lies not in pedagogical theory but in fiscal and management issues and thus attempts to change them are usually cosmetic in nature. Other artificial structures include an abundance of hierarchical management modes which are often out of step with the loosely-coupled, developmental nature of education. Furthermore, the increased politization of public education gives rise to even more artificial structuring as struggles for power and control often divert energies from truly educational issues.

Educational organizations need to be re-examined if schools are to make appropriate changes more effectively in the future than they have in the past. The purpose of the paper is not to develop new organizational structures but rather to provide a framework through which administrators and policy makers can examine present structures and assess the need for change. This framework is developed by examining schools from several perspectives, by scanning the changing scene, and by raising value questions.

PERSPECTIVES OF SCHOOLING

Schools as public institutions are viewed from many perspectives. Government officials devote large sums of money to schooling to alleviate social problems such as unemployment and

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racism. At times schools are linked to national destiny as in the pressure for bilingualism or in the case of the USA, the "Nation at Risk" report. Parents typically hope that that schools will help prepare young people for adult life. An increasing number of parents are counting on schools to preserve and support a particular culture and/or religion. Students are often disillusioned with school as preparation for employment but appreciate it as a place to be with friends. Most teachers concentrate on individual student growth whereas administrators see the school as an organizational structure. Researchers have focused on variables which interact within schools although recently there is added emphasis on seeing the school as a whole in a particular context. Hanson (1979) concludes that elected school officials are in a open system setting where interaction with the environment is paramount, administrators operate in a bureaucratic setting, and teachers are in a social system. So, schools are seen from many, varied perspectives and it would seem useful to attempt to put these together to gain a better understanding of the complete picture.

A framework, developed by Clandinnin and Connolly (1984) to illustrate perspectives on inquiry into schooling, has been adapted here (see Figure 1) to illustrate systematically various perspectives on schooling. The societal perspective reminds us of the fact that schools are created by society, reflect society, and are expected to respond to social conditions such as economic restraint and multiculturalism. Related, but more specific, are views regarding how well schools are doing what is intended. The

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Figure 1
PERSPECTIVES

Perspective	Typical Viewers	*Initiatives - Outcomes	Developments - Issues
1. Societal	Governments	Task forces, committees - recommendations - policy	Employment Multi-culturalism Finance
2. Intentional	Boards	Policy studies, evaluations - discrepancies	Provincial exams Long term plans
3. Structural	Boards/ Administrators	Interaction, administration - organizational charts - procedures	Burnout Principalship
4. Analytical	Researchers	Dissertations, studies - variables - effects	Goal clarity Interaction among staff
5. Portrait	Students Parents Teachers	Planning studies - scenarios	Alternate schools Relevance of programs
6. Narrative	Public	Public involvement - shared decision-making	C.E.A. poll Public opinion

*The writers have had recent, first-hand, experience in initiatives from all perspectives and draw upon it as a basis for this paper. Copies of related technical reports and papers are available from the authors.

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third perspective is central to this paper as related to it are questions concerning the structure and processes of education which are designed to achieve intended goals. Goal clarity and interaction among staff are two variables selected from among those considered important in research on change. The portrait view is holistic and has to do with the quality of a total experience. The narrative response unfolds over time and is more cultural or historical. It is probably accurate to say that schools are experiencing increased pressure from all angles but particularly from the portrait and narrative views which were largely neglected when school organizations were created.

Consideration of various perspectives is an essential early step in planning reconstruction. Without the "big picture" in mind a structural change could be made from one perspective that is inconsistant with feedback from, or developments in relation to another view. The requirement of some governments and systems for long-term planning could easily be inconsistant with what many believe regarding student involvement and the "teachable moment." Increased initiatives of provincial governments are seen by many boards to be infringing upon local autonomy. Many jurisdictions, especially in rural areas, have reduced support staff in response to economic restraint at the very time when it is need most to help people at the school level to maintain program quality when enrolments are declining, to make community involvement effective, and to provide a supportive school environment for all. It can be seen, then, that response from an intentional perspective (goals) may be a negative step from a

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portrait (student) view. Adjustments in keeping with economic restraint in our society may do serious damage from a structural - functional standpoint. Better understanding of many perspectives should enable leaders to respond more appropriately and more effectively to combined and multiple influences. Another step in gaining insight is to scan the total environment from which all perspectives are derived.

THE CHANGING SCENE

Organizations are created in response to particular conditions and to achieve specific purposes. Since the major features of most school organizations in this country were determined several generations ago, and, because profound changes in our society have occurred a serious examination of school organizations seems imperative. The changes themselves need only be mentioned to remind us of their impact on schools.

Changes in our society are the subject of both excitement and concern. From a societal point of view, the gobal village, mass media, and a shift from the Atlantic to the Pacific as the focus of attention are obvious. In addition, food supply, the protection of the environment, and the arms race dominate the news. Within our country unemployment, regionalism, economic restraint and multiculturalism are major concerns. The peace movement raises the hopes of all. Many provincial governments are reinstituting provincial examinations to determine if intended outcomes in basic skills acquisition are being attained. The structure of education is changing with one province adding grade twelve, another deciding to fully fund Roman Catholic schooling, and a third implementing a management finance plan which requires

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system policy for the evaluation of students, teachers, programs, schools, and school systems. Portraits of improved schools have been painted by parents in the Directions study in Saskatchewan and by many groups across the country who are establishing alternate schools. Personal experience is behind the results of public opinion poles such as that reported in the CEA Newsletter (1984) which indicates that 78.8% of the people feel school is important to success, 36.3% believe that schools have worsened since their day, and 47.6% think the public has too little to say in how schools are run. This last reaction is related to the claim of Whetten (1981) that schools have changed from closed, rational organizations where the administrator was a problem solver to open, political organizations where the administrator is a dilemma manager. The importance of changes in the context of schooling is magnified when we realize that the schools are more open to influence now than ever before. In fact, many school principals in major urban centers report that the survival of their school depends upon the ability of the school to respond to changes in the community. One frightening characteristic of a rapidly-changing society is that the central core of values, upon which decisions are based, tends to disintegrate.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE - VALUE QUESTIONS

If we are to restructure our organizations two cautions are in order. First, we must assure that the replacement structure does not contain the same or perhaps new and more devastating dysfunctions than those we are attempting to avoid. For example, if one moves from an hierarchical structure to one with

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collegial emphases one must not build in so many control mechanisms as to usurp the power of the collegial model. Second, we must attend to the issue of values.

The values inherent in our organizations of course are not those of organizations, per se, but those of people. Values which appear to have become institutionalized are often assumed but these too are values of people nonetheless. In this regard Greenfield (1985:22) continues to insist that the " science" of educational administration is "...largely empty, irrelevant or impotant." He claims this is due mainly to theorists who continue to reify organizations and to their avoidance of value issues. It is suggested that concern for "goodness" or "badness" as well as, and perhaps prior to, concern for efficiency or effectiveness is essential when restructuring is being considered.

Hodgkinson (1983:2-3) claims that administration is "philosophy in action". He also believes that technology and modern organization are committed to the megavalues of efficiency and effectiveness but they are deprived of meaning:

> The meaning of an organization is two fold: that growing out of the phenomenology of its members; [and] that capable of logical reduction through a rational or sociological perspective. The administrator is positioned at the interface between these two realms of value, and must reconcile both.
> (Hodgkinson 1978:143)

This requires reflection on the part of the administrator and reflection demands time.

These concerns rest not only with organization theorists but are at the crux of discussions in many disciplines. Sally McFague (1984) a prominant feminist theologian claims we have to destruct and reconstruct our models to effectively meet todays challenges.

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She even believes that the inherent message of "good news" in Biblical terms is the removal of hierarchies and challenges the most fundamental hierarchical image in our society, that of God as Lord and Master.

From a different managerial perspective, Ouchi (1981), when outlining characteristics of private organizations in Japan, emphasizes trust, subtlety and intimacy. Similarly, Hickman and Silva (1984), believe the six essential leadership skills are vision, sensitivity, insight, versitility, focus and patience.

Scott and Hart (1979) identify the National Managerial System which is composed of the "significant people" who are the chief executives and owners of the major corporations and the "professional people" who are the managers who make these organizations and the society run. Scott and Hart (1979:215) suggest that reform will not come from the governing elite (significant people) or from the general populace (insignificant people) but rather reform within the context of the modern organzation will require momentum to be supplied by the professionals, with the support of the insignificant people. Why are the professionals the only ones who can iniatiate organizational reform? Four reasons are given:

1. they are still young enough to be open,
2. their specializations cut across jurisdictional boundaries,
3. they understand organizational structure and behavior and know the critical places in organizations where reform is likely to be effective,

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4. they are close enough to the insignificant people, both on and off the job, to empathize with their difficulties and their aspirations. (Scott and Hart 1979:216)

In order to play this role Scott and Hart (1979) claim the professionals have some tough decisions to make. They must identify with the subunits of the organization and thus agree to remain followers and perhaps most important they must advocate the individual imperative.

Scott and Hart (1979:227) conclude:

> We advocate a synthesis: new organizations predicated upon the values of the individual imperative. It will require modifying the modern organization so that its technology, complexity, and the new environmental limits contribute to the fuller realization of individual lives. This revolution must be led by the professional people.

From all perspectives, in response to the changing scene, and with a value base, professional leaders in education are challenged to examine structures and to consider new possibilities.

DESIGNING NEW STRUCTURES

Where can we look when we wish to try some different assumptions in our restructuring? Does McGregor's (1960) theory Y provide an alternate set of assumptions for us to use as we structure new organizations which will be more in tune with the individual imperative? Surely this is too simple. This is not to underestimate the significance of McGregor and other third force psychologists but rather to suggest that their work, though well intended, was often used as the reason for organizational control rather than individual freedom. For example Likert's Principle of

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Supportive Relationships appears to have inherent in it consideration of values and the individual's welfare. Likert (1961:103) suggests:

> The leadership and other processes of the organization must be such as to insure a maximum probability that in all interactions and in all relationships within the organization, each member, in the light of his background, values, desires, and expectations, will view the experience as supportive and one which builds and maintains his sense of personal worth and importance.

The issue is not what Likert meant by this statement nor those programs designed for the institutionalization of the principle in organizations, but rather the way his programs were used as a means of control rather than support. This "velvet glove" usage of human resources theory selectively omits the value component. Because this has happened, utilization of third force psychology or human resources theory may be viewed as suspect as we search for new value bases for organizational restructuring.

A fresh new creativity is needed to take us outside our present organizational mind set when we examine new models and structures. Mintzberg (1983:296) hints at the need for this creativity in order to get beyond his basic five organizational forms: "Not every organization can create a whole new structural form. But some, to be truly effective, must. That is why those who possess real magic think beyond five." Years ago, James March (1971) thought beyond five when he questioned the dominance of certain articles of faith over organizations and organization theory. These included the idea of pre-existant purpose, the necessity of consistency and the primacy of rationality. He suggests that we should not accept goals as stable and value premises as given. March (1971:423) writes:

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> Interesting people and interesting organizations construct complicated theories of themselves. In order to do this they need to supplement the techonology of reason with a technology of foolishness. Individuals and organizations need ways of doing things for which they have no good reason. Not always. Not usually. But sometimes. They need to act before they think.

It is this technology of foolishness that allows us from time to time to be creative. March suggests that this creativity will come from an attitude of playfulness which can be fostered by:

1. Treating goals as hypotheses.
2. Treating intuition as real.
3. Treating hypocricy as a transition (hypocricy is the inconsistancy between expressed values and behavior.)
4. Treating memory as an enemy.
5. Treating experience as a theory.

March (1971:429)concludes:

> If we had a good technology of foolishness, it might (in combination with the technology of reason) help in a small way to enhance the unusual combinations of attitudes and behaviors that describe the interesting people, interesting organizations, and interesting societies of the world.

With this playful attitude let us examine some alternate assumptions. For example, Matthew Fox (1979) illustrates the assumptions underlying our relationships and our organizations using imagery in a Biblical context which illustrates two poles of thought, not conceptually unlike Scott and Hart's (1979) Individual and Organizational Imperatives. Fox (1979:54) contrasts "climbing Jacob's ladder" which is typical of many of our organizations, with "dancing Sarah's circle" which is based on some very different assumptions. (see Figure 2)

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Figure 2

CLIMBING JACOB'S LADDER	DANCING SARAH'S CIRCLE
a. up/down	a. in/out
b. Flat Earth	b. Global village
c. Climbing	c. Dancing, celebrating
d. Sisyphian	d. Satisfying
e. Competition	e. Shared ecstacies
f. Restrictive, elitist: Survival of the fittest	f. Welcoming, non-elitist: Survival of all
g. Hierarchical	g. Democratic
h. violent	h. strong and gentle
i. sky-oriented	i. earth-oriented
j. ruthlessly independent	j. Interdependent
k. Jealous and judgement oriented	k. pride-producing and non-judgemental
l. Abstract, distant-making	l. Nurturing and sensual
m. linear, ladder-like	m. curved, circle like
n. theistic (immanent or transcendent)	n. panantheistic (transparent)
o. love of neighbor is separate from love of what is at the top	o. love of neighbor <u>is</u> love of God

Fox's characteristics of Dancing Sarah's Circle could provide an interesting testing ground for the assumptions upon which we base new organizational forms to see how consistant they are with the individual imperative. It is suggested however that Fox's "democratic" in "g." above could be changed to "consensus seeking" and thus be more in tune with the individual imperative.

Another visionary, Stafford Beer (1973:81), examining the issue of restructuring, proposes:

> If institutions really are to be changed, then their fundamental organization must be altered; and a major component of that alteration will be to dismantle the bureaucracy. Changes which do not dismantle the bureaucracy are unreal; they do not lead to alteration, but to the adaption of the bureaucracy in continuing to produce itself.

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Experimentation with new organizational forms can be interesting activity. Beer (1984) is currently looking at a collegial structure which resembles Buckminster Fuller's Icosahedron as a model which, extremely strong in the physical world, might also be strong in the organizational world. This type of organization involves 30 people on 12 teams with each person a member of 2 teams of 5 and connected as illustrated in Figure 3. The lines in the figure represent people and the circles signify the 12 teams. This structure would be interesting to compare with the concept of Japanese "quality circles."

Figure 3*

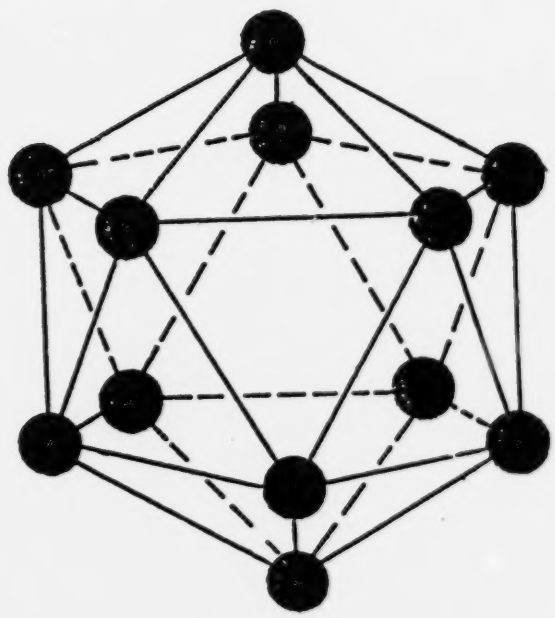

*Figure adapted by Michael Kompf.

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TEMPORARY STRUCTURES - A POSSIBILITY

While the ideas of Fox might be stimulating and the models of Beer intriguing are there practical ways we can try some of the concepts? In this regard temporary systems and collateral organizations give us opportunities to experiment with varying organizational forms with a view to examining not only their utility but their underlying morality or "goodness" as it relates to the individual imperative spoken of earlier.

Dale Zand (1974:69) proposed the use of collateral (knowledge / problem) organizations which are spun off the regular hierarchy to complete certain tasks. Collateral organizations are significantly different from the authority / production modes common in many organizations. According to Zand (1974:69) characteristics of collateral organizations include limited levels of authority, a low division of labor, many links to others in the organization, emphasis on expertise, few rules, and developmental orientation. Collateral organizations are best suited to dealing with "ill-structured" problems requiring creative solutions and are less effective for dealing with routine, "well-structured" situations.

Hopkirk's (1977) research suggests that task forces if properly structured and given a meaningful role can be places where the individual imperative is attended to if only for a limited time. Some of the factors to be considered in the structuring of a task force include:

a)clear purpose

b)provision for redefinition of problem and roles

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c)membership representing different educational perspectives

d)termination parameters

e)open access to information relating to various perspectives and opportunity to scan the changing scene

g)provision of time for membership development and for values clarification

h)sufficient resources

g)position security of the membership

While the use of temporary systems may be experimental there must be commitment involved. Commitment to the individual imperative and to creating adaptable structures. In this regard we must differentiate between adaptability and trendiness the former being open and future oriented whereas the latter is time bound and present oriented. Trendiness, like many of our innovations in education, is time and situation specific lacking conceptually and philosophically. One way to avoid this is to build into our temporary structures opportunities for the membership of these organizations to reflect. Schon (1983:19) believes the reflective practitioner constantly makes value judgements and makes them somewhat explicitly in the sense that he/she is aware of the art of reflection. He suggests that reflection - in - action is essential for effective and moral functioning but bureaucratic impediments act to negate this mode. Thus it is essential that in our restructuring or development of a temporary organization we allow time and encourage reflection on the part of members of the new organization so that with their insight they can become partners in the structuring process.

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CONCLUSION

Educational administrators and policy makers must take the lead if educational organizations are to be structured in ways consistant with their purposes. According to the framework developed in this paper this requires examination of various perspectives of schooling, attention to the changing scene, cognizance of values (particularly as they relate to the individual imperative), and finally awareness of alternate assumptions and experimental organizational forms.

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